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ELECTRICAL POWER DEVICES COOLING TECHNIQUE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention pertains generally to electrical power devices and more particularly to an apparatus for cooling electrical power devices.

Description of the Related Art

The power rating of present-day electrical devices, such as power transformers and motors, is limited by heat accumulation due to resistive losses in the copper windings and, in the case of power transformers, to losses from eddy currents and hysteresis within the iron or ferrite cores. It is not generally recognized that the magnetic flux within a transformer core remains approximately constant when the power output is increased. It is therefore unnecessary to increase the amount of iron or ferrite core material to increase the size of the transformer core in order to deliver more power. The trapped heat produced by the windings while operating at high power is the major limiting factor for high power transformers.

Different approaches have been attempted to try and remove heat from the core of power transformers. Some of these are the increasing of wire size to reduce resistive losses; immersion of

the transformer in circulating coolant oil; air cooling of the transformer windings; increasing the operating frequency of the transformer to reduce windings; and increasing the thermal conductivity of the insulating potting compound around the transformer windings. All of these, however, impact on the mechanical size and weight of the transformer designs limiting the use of these applications. Without proper cooling the efficiency and reliability of these transformers and motors are considerably reduced.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The object of this invention is to provide an apparatus for cooling high power electrical devices.

Another object of this invention is to provide a cooler operating high power electrical device that is of light weight, low cost, higher power density, and highly efficient design.

These and other objectives are obtained by placing thermal conductive strips between the turn layers along the axis and perpendicular to the turns of an high power electrical device, such as a transformer or motor, which extends outside of the windings or between the laminates of the core. The excess heat is conducted outward from the interior of the device along the strips to the outside of the device's windings where it is extracted from the protrusions by means of a highly thermal-conductive potting compound that has a short thermal path to a

small heat sink.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows a cutaway view of a transformer with a thermal conductive strip between layers of wire turns around the transformer core.

Figure 2 shows the temperature gradient for a transformer constructed utilizing current state-of-the-art techniques.

Figure 3 shows the temperature gradient for a transformer constructed utilizing a thermal conductive strip technique.

Figure 4 shows a cutaway view of a transformer with a thermal conductive strip between layers of wire turns around the transformer core and a thermocooler.

Figure 5a shows an electric motor with a thermal conductive strip between windings of the motor.

Figure 5b shows a cutaway of a motors laminations with thermal conductive strips interleaved between laminations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The apparatus for cooling a high power electrical device, such as a transformer **10**, as shown in **Figure 1**, comprised of various core materials such as laminated iron, ferrite, and other core materials known to those skilled in the art. The transformer core **12** is comprised of windings of conducting material **14**; preferably copper wire, preferably insulated with

KAPTON® type 150FN019, manufactured by DuPont of Wilmington, DE, or similar material, wrapped around the transformer core **12**. KAPTON® type FN is a type HN film coated on one or both sides with TEFLON® FEP fluorocarbon resin to impart heat sealability, to provide a moisture barrier and to enhance chemical resistance. The KAPTON® prevents electrical shorts between conductors and adjacent layers. Heat is dissipated from the transformer core **12** to ambient through a base plate **17**.

A thermally conductive material, or strip, **16** placed in preselected locations between the windings of conductive material **14**, the ends of which protrude outside of the area covered by the conductive material **14**. In the example shown in **Figure 1** of a completed transformer **10**, the thermally conductive material **16** is inserted between every other layer of conductive material **14**. The thermally conductive strip **16**, is preferably a high modulus carbon graphite laminate material, such as an Amoco type K1100X pitch fiber processed by Composite Optics of San Diego, CA. The laminate of the conductive strip **16** is highly efficient in conducting heat along the fiber orientation which is unidirectional. An alternative material for the thermally conductive strip **16** is copper or a ceramic, however these have not been found to be as efficient in conducting heat away from the center of a device, such as the transformer **10**, as the high modulus carbon graphite laminate material.

The thermally conductive strip **16** normally has a smooth

epoxy surface finish. To improve the thermal interface by as much as 10%, the strips **16** must be lightly scraped with a sharp instrument, such as a razor blade, to remove a small portion of the residual epoxy and fibers left over from the manufacturing process. After scraping, the strip **16** will appear dull with a graphite appearance.

Because the thermally conductive strip **16** normally will have sharp edges on the sides, a narrow glass tape (not shown), approximately 0.005 inches thick, 0.250 inches wide, and having a voltage breakdown of approximately 5 kV, such as 3M glass cloth tape No. 361, a pressure sensitive, 7.5 mil tape good to a temperature of 235°C, manufactured by 3M Electrical Products Division of Austin, TX, is used to buffer the layers of the windings **14** from the thermally conductive material **16** to prevent damage to the winding **14** coating thereby shorting out the transformer.

The glass tape (not shown) is placed on the edge of the thermally conductive material **16** on both sides of the strip **16** and offset by one-half the tape width parallel to the strips **16**. In the art this technique is commonly referred to as "butterflying." The application of the glass tape (not shown) forms a wedge adjacent to the edge of the strip **16**.

A thermally conductive grease (~~not shown~~), such as type 120-8, manufactured by Wakefield of Wakefield, MA, is placed in the wedge formed by the tape (not shown) and the strip **16**; a

technique well known to those skilled in the art. The strip **16** is installed into the core **12** on top of the thermal grease (~~not~~ shown) and a second application of the thermal ~~gresae~~ (~~not shown~~) is used to cover the strip **16**. The thermal grease (~~not~~ shown) is placed ~~beteen~~ the two layers of glass tape (not shown) and a second piece of glass tape (not shown) is placed over the first by starting at one edge and lowering the tape (not shown) to the strip **16**. A light pressure is used to encompass the two glass tapes (not shown) together and make contact with the strip **16** sealing the thermal grease (~~not shown~~) inside of the structure. This is accomplished on both sides of the strip **16**, as previously stated. Heat generated within the transformer by resistive losses in the windings of electrically conductive material **14** and due to eddy currents within the core **12** is conducted to the portions of the thermally conductive ~~material~~ **16** protruding outside of the windings of conductive ~~material~~ **14** and in contact with the ferrite core or iron laminates **12**.

Surrounding the transformer **10** is a high thermal-conductivity potting compound **22**, such as STYCAST® 2850, or similar material. STYCAST® 2850 is a highly filled, castable epoxy system manufactured by Emerson & Cumming, Inc. of Lexington, MA. Potting of the transformer core **12** is accomplished by placing the completed wound copper-core in a mold (not shown) in which potting compound **22** is molded around the transformer core **12** to provide a short thermal path to a base-

plate main heat sink **17** where excess heat is dissipated to surround atmosphere. The mold (not shown) with the transformer **10** and potting compound **22** is placed into an evacuated chamber (not shown) until the potting compound **22** expands to the top of the mold (not shown) and cured for approximately two hours at approximately 100 degrees centigrade. The vacuum atmosphere within the chamber (not shown) further forces the thermally conductive epoxy (not shown) in and around the windings **14** of the completed copper core and the mold profile, thereby, further enhancing the heat dissipation of the strips **16**. The vacuum is applied and released a number of times until the potting compound **22** stops expanding to insure that very little air remains within the windings **14** or mold assembly (not shown). This will eliminate core failures due to corona. Additional potting compound **22** may have to be added to the mold (not shown) so as to cover completely the windings **14** when done.

The potting compound **22** on a transformer **10** is extended to the outer edge of the transformer core **12** on the base plate side only. On the other side the potting compound **22** need extend only past the outer edges of the thermally conductive material **16**.

To prevent mechanical stresses on the transformer core **12** due to the expansion of the potting compound **22**, the mold assembly should be designed so as to provide a "head space" or gap **23** between the potting compound **22** and the transformer core **12**. In assembly this space is filled with a thermal heat sink

strip , such as SIL-PAD® 2000, manufactured by Berquist of Minneapolis, MN.

Alternatively, in place of the potting compound **22**, the heat may be conducted from the ends of the thermally conductive strips **16** by the use of a fan (not shown), a technique that is well known to those skilled in the art.

In a design of a test transformer, a 2 kva (2 kW) power transformer providing 1.2 lb/kW was constructed using modern state-of-the-art techniques well known to those skilled in the art. The design measures 3.02 inches by 3.17 inches by 2.22 inches, and weighed 2.4 pounds. In tests, the transformer constructed according to state-of-the-art techniques, after 40 minutes, showed a windings temperature of 200°C at the center of the windings and suffered catastrophic failure due to excess heat (**Figure 2**).

A duplicate transformer **10** weighing approximately 0.21 lb/kW was constructed utilizing the technology set forth in this invention with the K1100 conductive strips **16** placed within the windings **14** of the transformer. The design measured 3.02 inches by 3.17 inches by 2.22 inches and weighed 2.4 pounds. In tests, the transformer **10** with the thermally conductive strips **16** placed alternately between windings (**Figure 1**) showed, after approximately 40 minutes, a windings **14** temperature of approximately 70°C without failure (**Figure 3**).

This invention allows for the reduction in size of a high

power transformers by a factor of 4 to 8 and a reduction in weight by a factor of 4 to 6, and an increase in power density by 5 to 10 in power. The efficiency of the transformer is improved by maximizing the heat transfer from the transformers interior and minimizing voltage breakdown. The thermal properties of each core **12** will dictate the quantity of thermally conductive ~~material~~ **16** required to lower the transformer temperature to a predetermined level, some testing may be required to established the optimal amount needed to provide proper cooling.

When additional cooling is required or to raise the power of a transformer **20**, ~~as shown in~~ Figure ~~4~~, a thermocooler **18**, such as a model CP2-127-06-7 made by Melcon of Trenton, NJ, may applied to the outside of the transformer **20**. The thermocooler **18**, with or without a cooling fan (not shown). Control of the thermocooler **18** may be such that it could be turned on and off as cooling demands raise and lower. The thermocooler **18** may ~~either~~ be attached to the outer portions of the transformer **20** where it could be easily removed for replacement, if required. In some instances it may be desirable to selective control the operation of the thermocooler **18**, therefore a control device such as a timer (not shown) or thermal switch (not shown) may be integrated into the transformer **20** package to either increase the thermal conductivity or decrease it by switching the thermocooler on or off, as desired.

Although this embodiment has been described in relation to an exemplary device such as a transformer, the claimed invention may equally well be utilized in other types of electrical devices where internal heat is a problem, such as motors, modulation transformers, etc. The size of the transformer is not of concern, it may vary from a small transformer used in switching power supplies to power transformers used in electrical distribution systems. Further, the frequency of the electrical current within the devices to be cooled is irrelevant, e.g., 60 cycles to 400 cycles operate the same thermally. High frequency transformers have higher copper losses due to skin effects. This additional heat may also be removed by the thermally conductive ~~material~~, as set forth in this invention.

When applied to electrical motors **30**, as shown in **Figure 5a**, pieces of thermally conductive ~~material~~ **16** are placed between windings of the motor **30** or interleaved into vertically stacked motor laminations **32**, as shown in **Figure 5b**. The internal heat from the motor laminations **32** and windings **36** is conducted from the interior of the motor **30** to the outer portions where the heat is then dissipated through the motor case **34** to ambient atmosphere.

Although the invention has been described in relation to the exemplary embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that still other variations and modifications can be affected in the preferred embodiment without detracting

from the scope and spirit of the invention as stated in the claims.